EXCLUSIVE: The Freddy vs. Jason movie!

FANGORIA

K47909 £2.95 U.K.

The #1 Horror Magazine —Now in our 16th year!

#144 JULY

BATMAN FOREVER
Dark Knight preview

SPECIAL REPORT: Role-playing games YOU control the terror!

CONGO
Gorilla warfare

Stallone speaks!

JUDGE DREDD
Future shocks

$5.99 U.S./$7.99 CANADA

SUMMER'S ALIEN HORROR

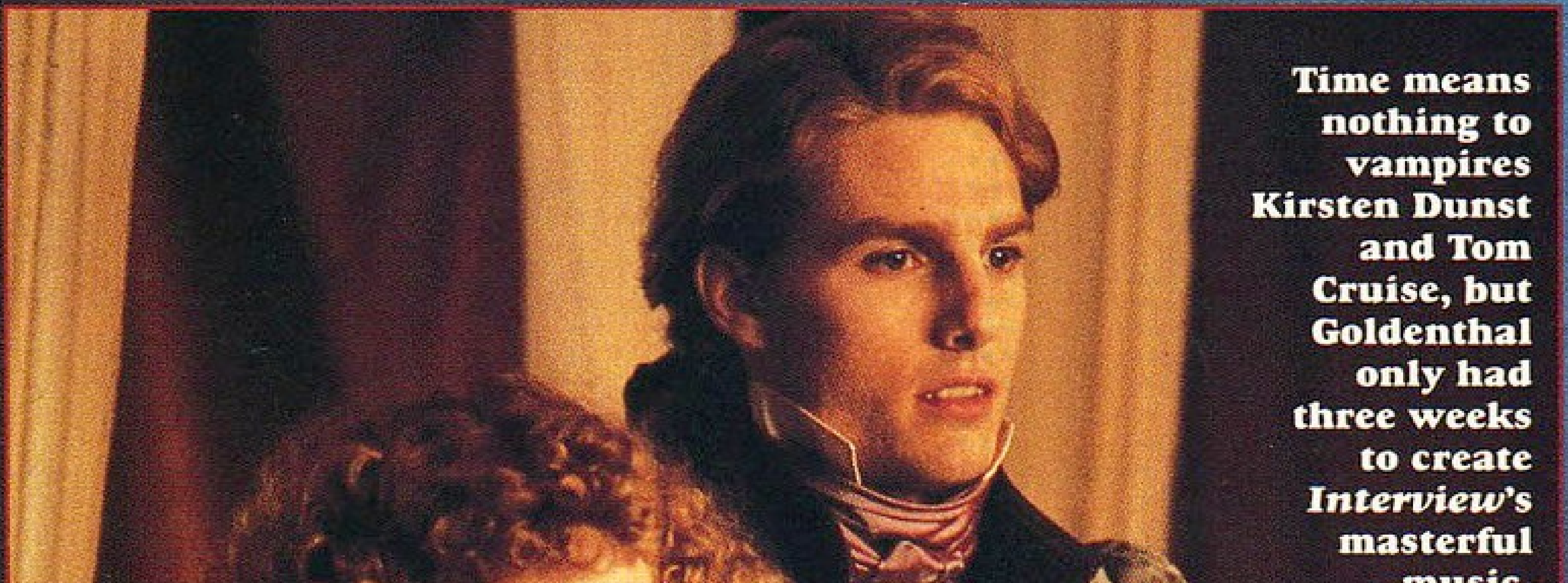
H.R. GIGER'S SPECIES

SHE WANTS TO BREED!

DARK NIGHTS OF COMP

Elliot Goldenthal takes an experimental approach to major film scores like "Batman Forever" and "Interview With the Vampire."

By IAN GREY



Time means nothing to vampires Kirsten Dunst and Tom Cruise, but Goldenthal only had three weeks to create *Interview*'s masterful music.

Interview Photo: François Duhamel/Copyright 1994 Geffen

A melancholy female voice sings what sounds like a solo Gregorian chant as we witness the grisly fates of the characters in *Alien³*. Trilling harpsichords accompany the vampire Lestat on his bloody rounds. Barren strings underscore the pain of a man raiding the grave of his dead son in *Pet Sematary*.

Welcome to the dark musical dreamworld of composer Elliot Goldenthal, where one quickly learns to expect the unexpected.

"It's very important to experiment," the composer says, speaking from a Manhattan studio where he is crash-and-burning his way through the score for *Batman Forever*. Goldenthal prefers the graveyard shift, usually working from about 10 p.m. to dawn—very appropriate for the man who composed the Oscar-nominated music for *Interview With the Vampire*.

And experiment he does, as, without audible strain, he summons a musical arsenal that includes bizarre or antique devices (such as the "glass harmonica," a 200-year-old instrument that makes a pure, ringing tone), synthesizers, boys' choirs and, of course, massive orchestras. No Johnny one-note synthesizer "wizard" here. The reason for Goldenthal's rapid rise from his first major score (*Pet Sematary*) on through blockbusters like *Demolition Man*, *Alien³*, *Interview* and

***Batman Forever*? Not if Two-Face (Tommy Lee Jones) and the Riddler (Jim Carrey) can help it.**

Bat Photos: Ralph Nelson/TM & © DC Comics

the new *Batman* is simple: He is a master of a truly modern symphonic style, creating thundering works that would play as well on the concert stage as on the screen.

And all this from a man who practically stumbled into film scoring by accident. He humbly elaborates, "Um—the movies just sorta came to me. Any time I did send out a tape, it never came back. My background is basically concert, stage and theater. A *lot* of theater; over 20 productions."

His first film was 1979's underground fave *Blank Generation*, starring art-world icon Andy Warhol and directed by Ulli Lommel, who himself would later toil in the fields of horror with *The Boogey Man* and *Brainwaves*. But it would be another 10 years before fate would place *Pet Sematary* director Mary Lambert in the audience of one of Goldenthal's theatrical productions. She immediately signed him to provide the haunting music for the Stephen King-based shocker, jumpstarting a phenomenal career that has led him to replace Danny Elfman on the latest Dark Knight adventure.

Explaining Elfman's absence on the new film, Goldenthal says, "[*Batman Forever* director] Joel Schumacher heard *Demolition Man*, and the next day asked me to do it. Joel likes Danny and Tim Burton; the two have done some *great* work. It's just that our film has a different Batman, a different director, a different sort of story. Joel is a very forceful individualist—he didn't want to feel he was doing a sequel."

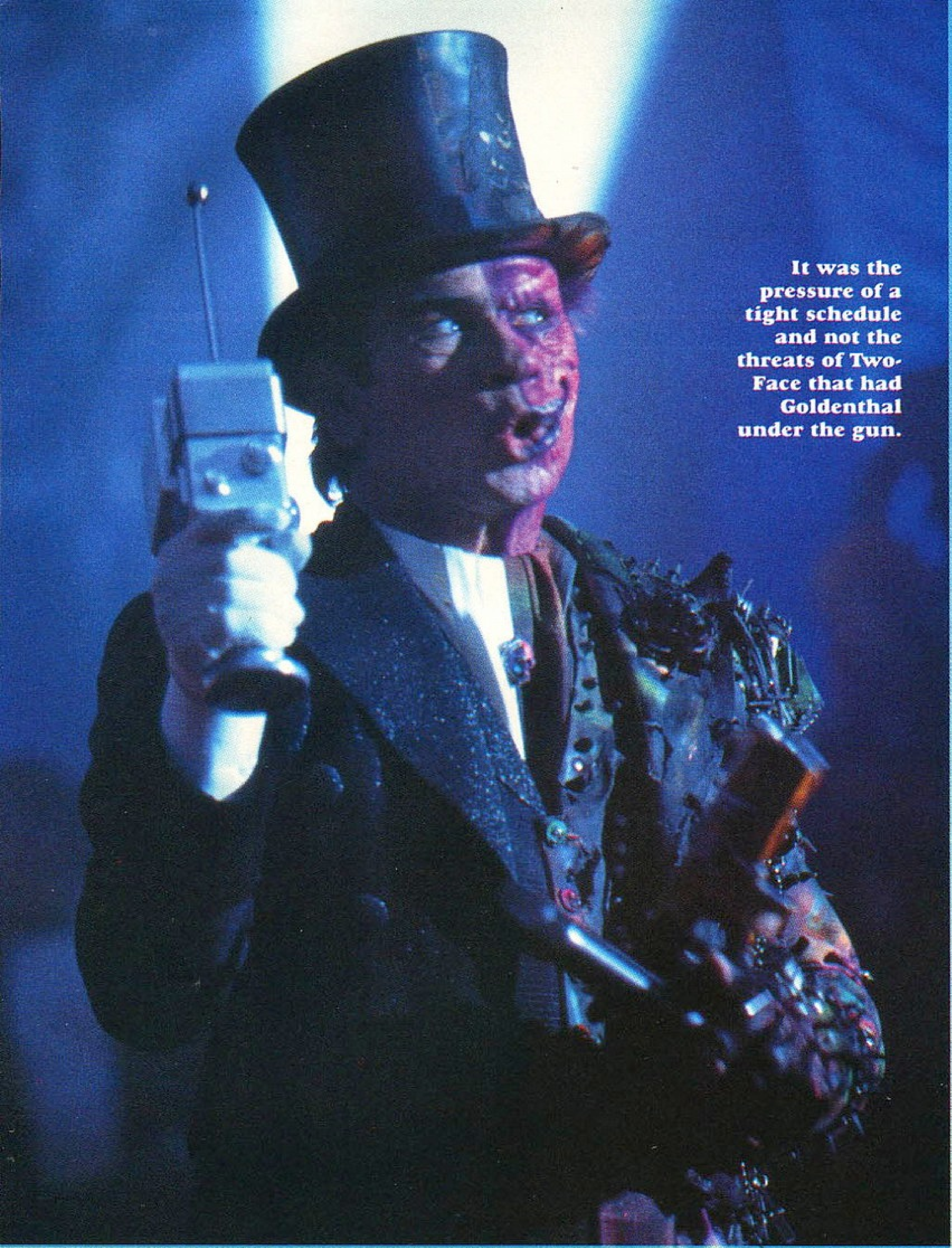
"I'd rather go down experimenting than worry that something is going to sound like everything else."

Goldenthal believes that Schumacher picked him because the new director had "a sense of wanting somebody who *hadn't* done a Batman film. It's a very self-contained movie. It feels like *this* could be the first *Batman*."

Clarifying this new approach, Goldenthal notes, "There's a lot more of the feel of the *Dark Knight* comic books, but more like *wham! boom! pow!* There's still plenty of dark Gothic in this, but also a sense of rapid-fire speed to contrast with Val Kilmer's performance [as the new Batman]. He's still brooding, but he doesn't whine! He's almost Clint Eastwood-like."

Also in the cast as the Riddler is Hollywood's hottest funnyman, Jim Carrey, who clearly has Goldenthal on his side. "Carrey is *very* funny, amazing—he's one of our great clowns." So how does one score the *Mask* madman's antics? "Sometimes you score it *serious*," the composer says. "You could write a really sexy tango, even. A comic may have certain physical things that suggest a tempo, and you build from there. The Riddler works in a lab with a lot of toys and gadgets and circusy things, so you might start there—though I haven't written it yet!" Goldenthal laughs.

What he has written at the time of this interview include "one grand theme, a portrait of the Riddler and a military theme for Batman and Robin going off to set the world straight." And despite the pressures involved in scoring an FX-laden megaproduction such as *Batman Forever*, his enthusiasm



It was the pressure of a tight schedule and not the threats of Two-Face that had Goldenthal under the gun.

for the film is as infectious as the Riddler's demented laugh. "I saw it the other day, and it looked fabulous!" he raves. "I describe it as the kind of movie that, when I was younger, *I* wanted to see in the summer. It's got a tremendous amount of irreverence, layers of depth, wonderful action and insane comedy, and Nicole Kidman [as a psychologist] is very sexy. It's kind of a love triangle between Bruce Wayne, Batman and Kidman," he says with an appreciative chuckle.

Part of the new movie's approach involves the long-delayed introduction of Robin to the Batman film universe. "Robin is very sincere, innocent," Goldenthal says. "He's from a circus family, an evil deed is done to him and he seeks retribution. He finds Bruce Wayne, but Wayne says that retribution is not the way—and if you kill your enemy, you'll still be stuck with the anger."

The composer confirms, however, that *Batman Forever* retains the dramatic emphasis on the Jekyll-and-Hyde relationship between Bruce Wayne and his heroic alter ego. "Yes—to the max!" he exclaims. "There'll probably even be separate themes for both aspects of him."

Along with Goldenthal's breadth of knowledge as a composer, there is another aspect of his talent that must make Hollywood producers deliriously happy: The man is *fast*. His sprawling score for *Interview*, complete with full orchestra, the American Boys' Choir and a vast array of electronics, took a mere *three weeks*, after a completed, recorded and entirely different score was dropped at the last moment. "The way it happened was [composer] George Fenton and [director] Neil Jordan went down a path together and thought this was the way to go," Goldenthal explains. "Fenton had a beautiful score, but it was extremely slow, and the film, in particular Brad Pitt with his, well, *mumbling* and *whispering*, made everything seem twice as slow. My assignment was to create some up-tempo, get the feet tapping...the blood flowing," he says, chuckling at the inadvertent sanguine reference.

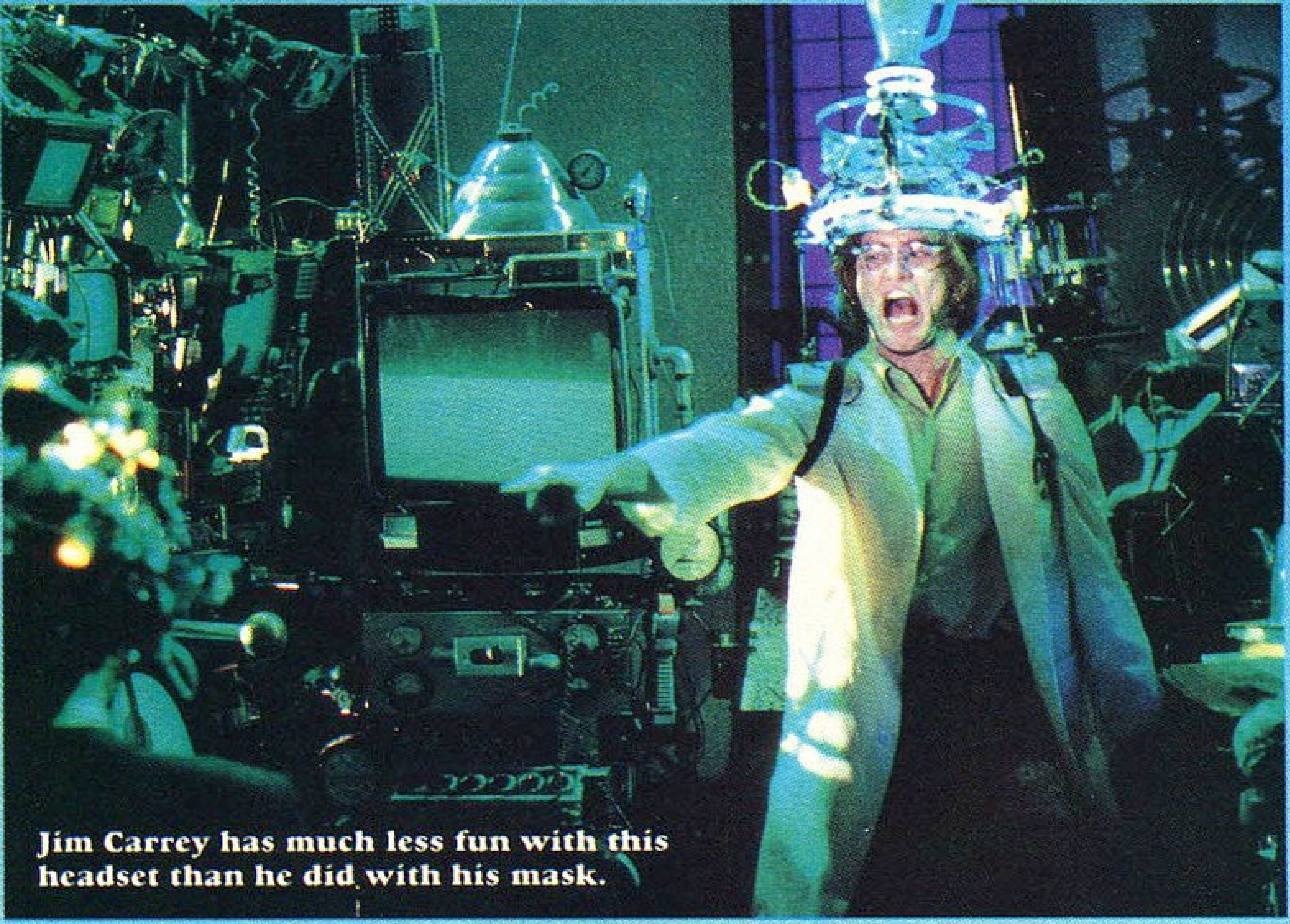
Pausing for a moment to relate his feelings about the film's main actors, he states, "Tom Cruise is a *great* guy—down-to-earth. Whatever weird stories you've heard probably had to do with Brad Pitt. Tom was delightful, a total professional. He worked *really* hard."

Despite the time constraints, Goldenthal found *Interview* to be a breeze compared with some of his other assignments. "I had a *great* time working with Neil," he says. "Any suggestion he made was always to the positive." He shrugs off the pressures inherent in a monstrously complex undertaking like *Interview* by noting, "Most of the time you get six to eight weeks for the music, but very often, a film is not locked [in its final, edited form] and they keep tinkering and making changes. On *Alien^3*, they were making changes up to the final day! With *Interview*, I was working with a finished film. I did my work, Jordan made suggestions, I changed it and then it was *done*. No backtracking. It was heaven!"

Goldenthal drew from a rich palette of musical styles to chart the century-spanning, globetrotting tale of the rootless undead. "I used medieval instruments to suggest the sounds of Armand, the oldest vampire," he explains, "and whole scenes of harpsichord for Lestat. He was a sort of foppy, overdressed, period character, a very 18th-century sort."

Though the film is punctuated with harshly discordant explosions of sound to accompany its horrific moments of over-the-top grue (such as the scene where French vamp Stephen Rea gets rudely sliced in half), the main mood of the soundtrack is one of extreme melancholia. Taking Anne Rice's perennial best seller as a starting point, he notes, "It's in the book, that if you are immortal and take sex away, what's left is boredom—and relationships and love. I mean, if you're with someone for 250 years and you decide to travel with someone else, there's just a huge despair in immortality."

Speaking of despair, there's the troubled history of what he believes is his finest genre work, the score for *Alien^3*. "The first [*Alien*] scared the shit out of me," Goldenthal says. "But on the third one, the studio didn't trust it to fulfill its darkest qualities."



Jim Carrey has much less fun with this headset than he did with his mask.

and it goes [*makes growling, low-pitched monster noise*] "*Grrrroooww! Grrooowww!*"

But even in space, no one can do it all alone, so Goldenthal utilizes a team approach to his scores, including orchestrator Robert Elhai and synthesist Richard Martinez. "I have a very efficient team," he praises. "It's impossible, on these big films with these kinds of schedules, to do everything alone. The way it will typically work is, Bob and I will sit down at a keyboard, I'll suggest a zillion things and Bob will sift through my outlandish, crazy suggestions. In *Alien*^{3}, I had the trombonists singing into their trombones while they were playing. I had *no idea* it would sound good," he says, sounding amazed it did, and then restates his credo: "I'd rather go down experimenting than worry that something is going to sound like everything else."

All this talk of eccentric instruments, wildly imaginative stylistic mixes and unusual composition technique leads one to ask Goldenthal if, compared to other genres, horror and the *fantastique* offer a composer more creative freedom. The answer is quick and definitive: "Yes, absolutely." And though he was not a particular fan of genre films before, he notes, "I just tend to gravitate towards those sorts of projects." His résumé bears this out: Even his non-genre films, such as the opiate-obsessed *Drugstore Cowboy* and the quirky, neo-noir *Golden Gate*, don't exactly qualify as mainstream fare.

Even now, as he works against a ticking clock on *Batman Forever*, he

Obviously still irked in regards to the studio's reluctance to go the grim distance, Goldenthal illuminates what may be one reason *Alien*^{3} left many viewers in the dark. "There was an entire subplot which was cut out," he reveals, with a combination of wonder and disgust. "The insane character who first sees the Alien kill someone became obsessed, thinking the Alien was his God—his magnificent dragon. But then they [the other inmates on *Alien*^{3}'s prison-world locale] thought it was the crazy guy killing everyone.

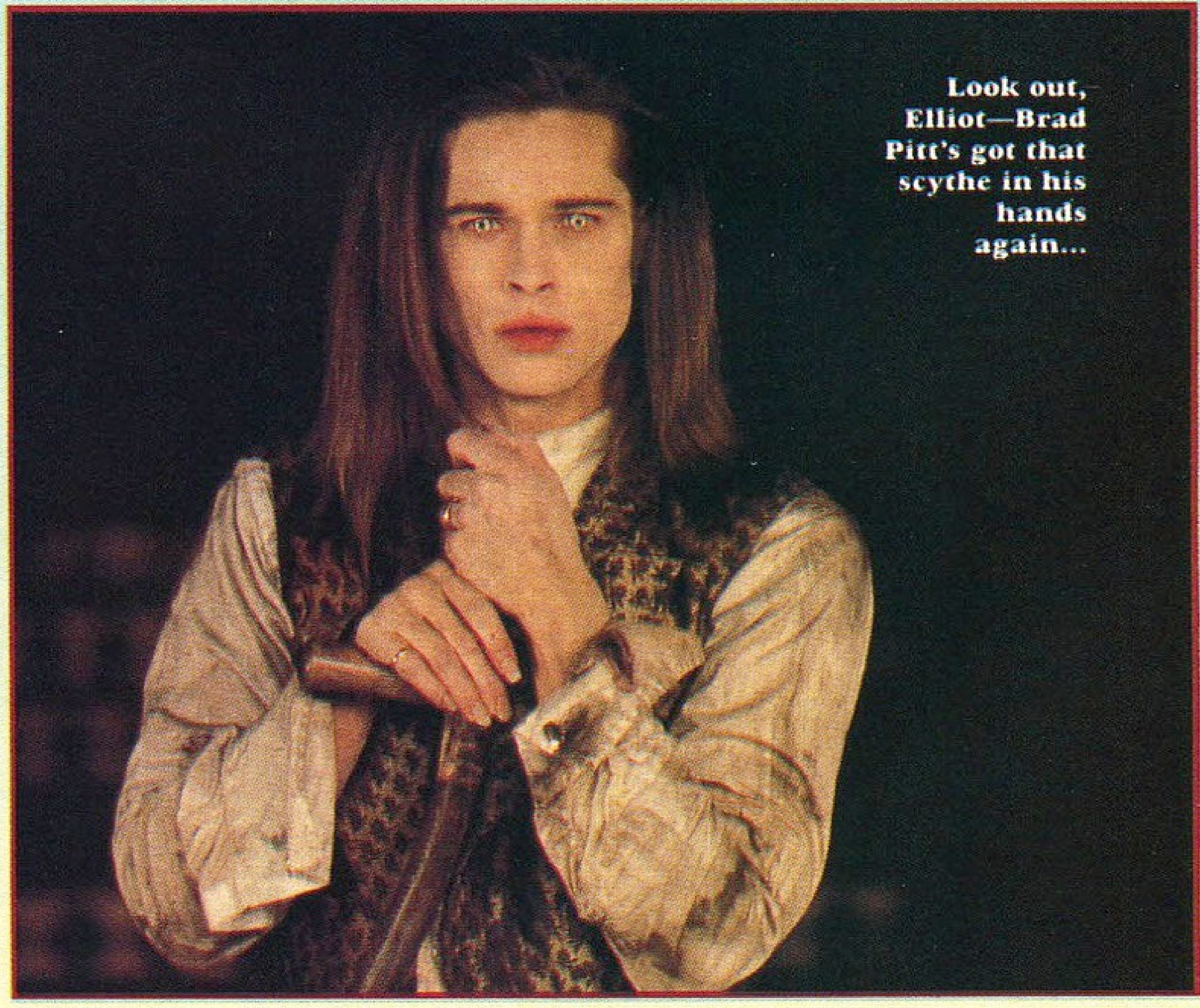
"The inmates trapped the Alien, but then this insane character freed it!" he continues. "Big mistake, cutting that out. And Charles Dutton [the fundamentalist Christian leader] was much more fire-and-brimstone. He and this sort of Antichrist Alien-worshipper were strong characters." The composer sighs. "And it all ended up on the cutting room floor."

Along with Goldenthal's music. When asked how *that* felt, his voice drops. "It's debilitating—physically, emotionally and everything else. You know the studio doesn't trust an audience, that it just won't get into all this darkness and weirdness."

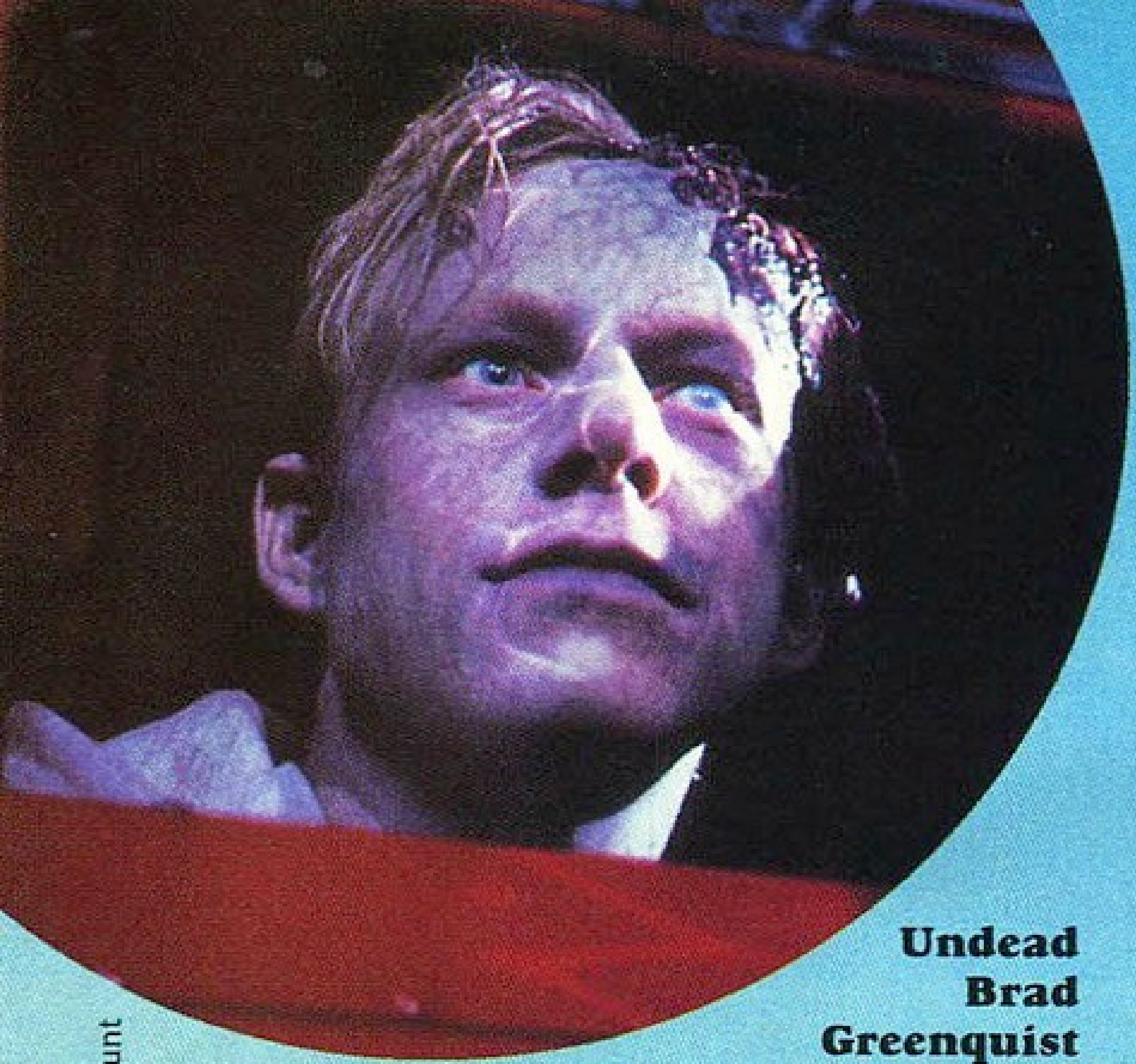
Along with a controversy-queasy studio came some real-life horrors. "The Los Angeles riots kicked in while we were doing the final dub!" Goldenthal reveals. "I was mixing and mastering, and it just made everything all the more difficult."

Not surprisingly, the composer speaks sympathetically of controversial first-time feature director David Fincher. "He also had to deal with the riots and the fact that he was waging war with the studio," Goldenthal says. "It was such a difficult, arduous thing for David to fight the studio *every day*, and finally, he had the feeling while it was being mixed that he just couldn't win and threw his hands up in the air."

But he cheers up noticeably when asked about *Alien*^{3}'s undeniably brilliant music, which combines punishing electronic percussion, medieval free-song and a perversely triumphant fanfare for Sigourney Weaver's final fall into the prison's raging furnace, taking special delight in telling of yet another oddball instrument used to send aural chills down the audience's collective spine. "We had an instrument called a steel cello, which is actually a piece of steel like a string, bowed with a bass bow



Look out, Elliot—Brad Pitt's got that scythe in his hands again...



Undead Brad Greenquist would rather listen to Goldenthal's ***Pet Sematary*** score than to what's playing on the car radio.

Photo: Copyright 1988 Paramount

is simultaneously composing an epic, 20th-anniversary symphony commemorating the real-life, continuing horrors of the survivors of the Vietnam War. Scored for 180 singers and full orchestra, it is entitled "Fire, Water, Paper."

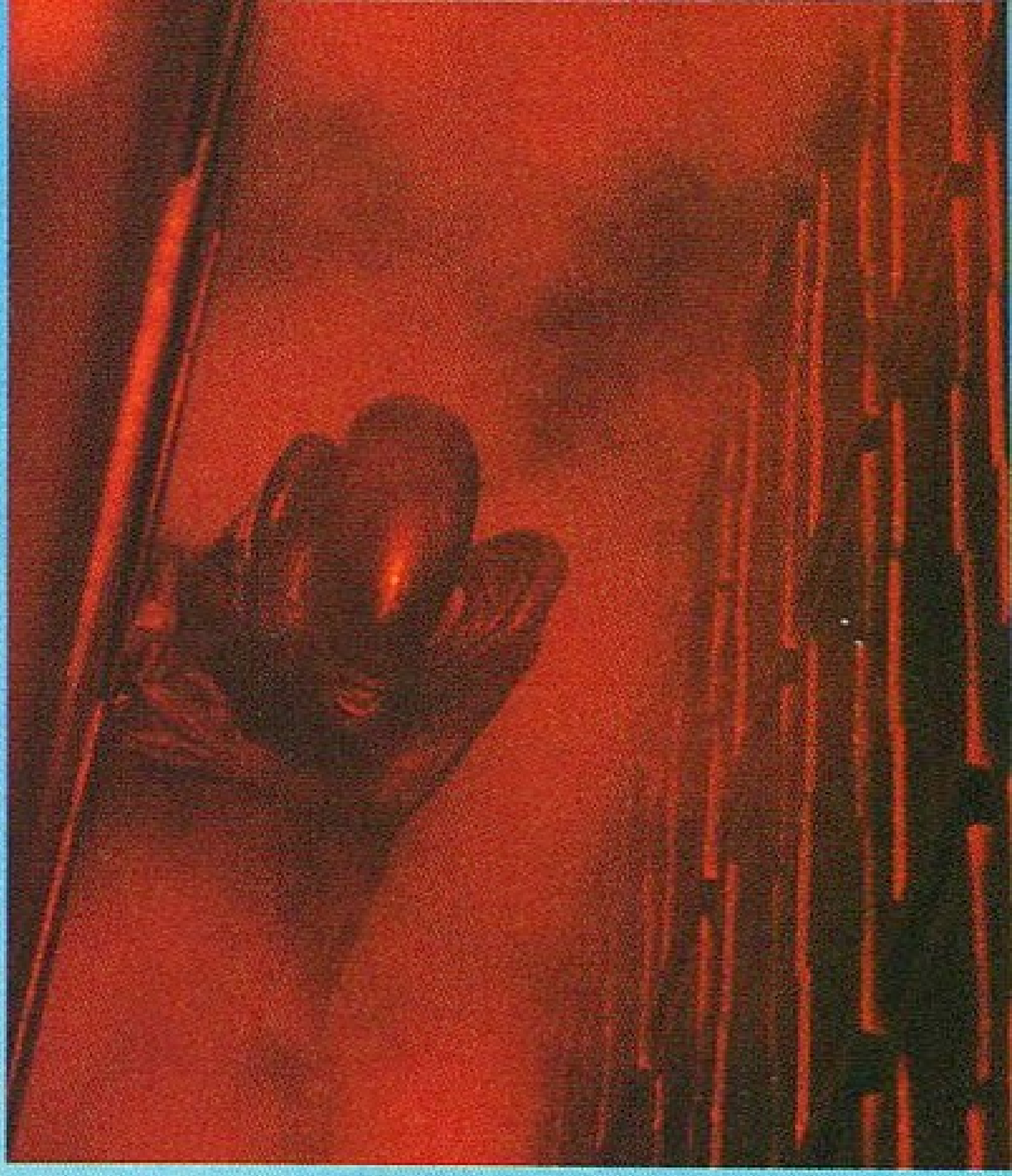
Yet it is part of Goldenthal's unassuming charm that he can go from discussing a major, serious concert piece to chatting excitedly about his entry into cinematic terror, *Pet Sematary*. Again, Goldenthal avoided horror movie clichés, choosing not to focus on the gruesome aspects of King's tale. "I went for emotionality and tenderness to play against the horror," he explains. "I'd read the book, and thought it worked well to evoke the despair of the father losing his son. The sense of loss and despair permeated the whole score." To achieve this, he kept things elegantly simple. "It was basically just strings, piano and toy piano. I also did the horror-sounding stuff, but I kept the other [emotionally atmospheric] themes in too."

Continuing this motif of keeping things simple when simple is best, and also commenting on the occasional overuse of sound FX (which he has a great deal of respect for in the right place), he points out one of horror's finest moments. "Think about *Psycho*'s shower scene—it's *really* scary," he says, recalling the work of his main influence, the great Bernard Herrmann, whose shrieking strings are accompanied only by the sound of the water running and Janet Leigh's screams. "I think that scene, had it been done now with a lesser hand than Hitchcock's, you would have heard"—he whispers melodramatically—"the shower dripping, the curtain rods noise, the squeaking of her feet, Norman's footsteps reverberating, the knife going in—but all that wouldn't have taken the audience into the dreamworld."

His voice takes on a distant sound. "In the dreamworld, it's more like music."

The word "dreamworld" pops up frequently when Goldenthal speaks of film scoring. But instead of explaining it in terms of his own music, he modestly derails the conversation again to the works of Herrmann. "He did that in *Psycho*. There's just the strings and the action—it's brilliant! If you look at [the original] *Cape Fear*, when you see Robert Mitchum drown this guy in the river, there's *no* sound, just Herrmann's frightening music, and it's scary as hell. A lot of my scores are ruined—I couldn't sit through *Alien^3*. It's not the sound effects guys, I love those guys—it's usually the director."

But having had such good rela-



A fickle studio and not the title creature were the main threats to the composer's work in *Alien^3*.

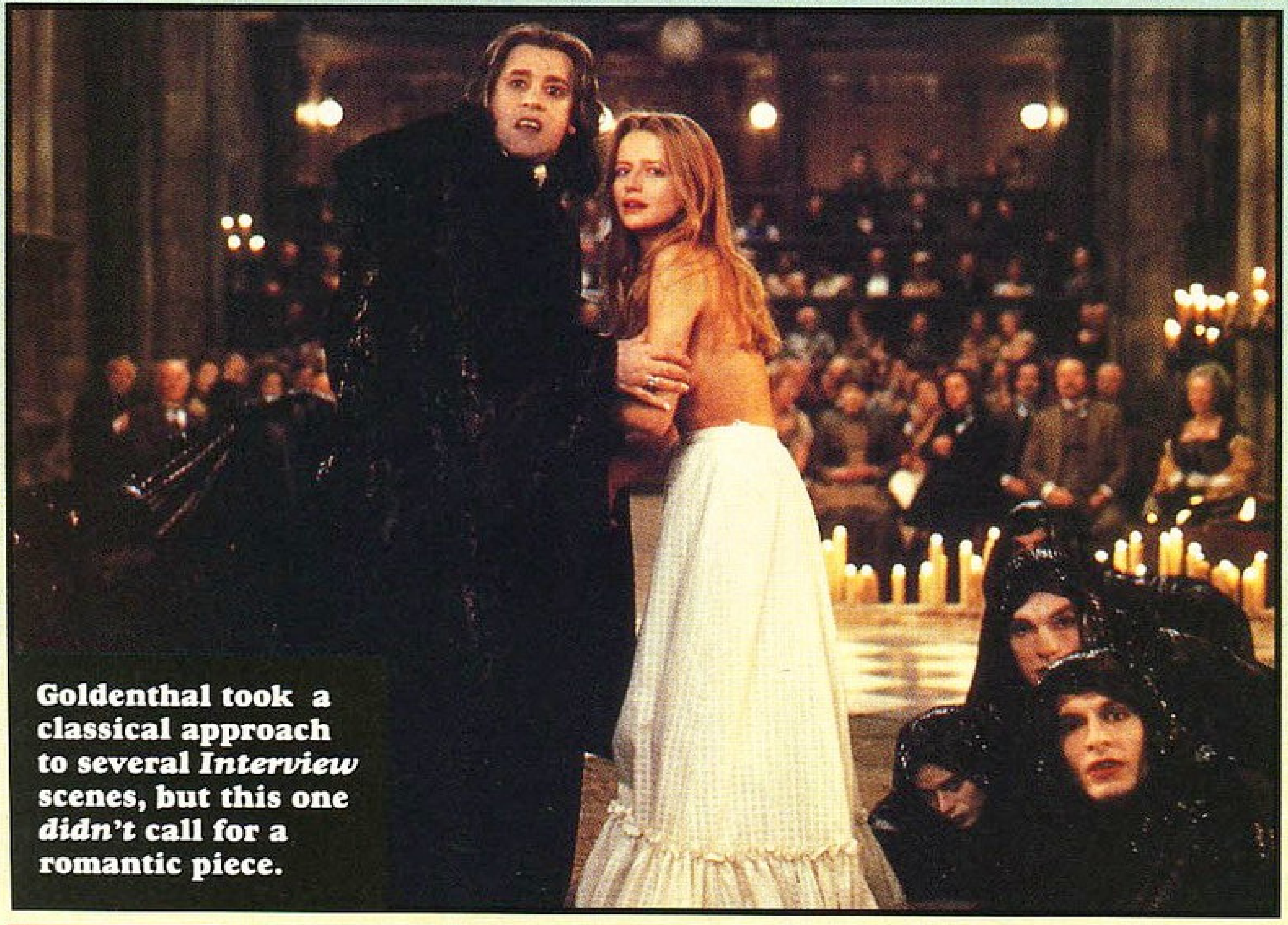
tionships with his directors overall, he hurries to explain, "The directors see 80 tracks of sound effects and two tracks of music. They're like kids in a candy store; the temptation is too great to have all these amazing sounds." He sums the entire issue up with a trace of amusement in his voice: "Selectivity would be the better part of valor."

As for the future, and plans for an *Interview* sequel, he reports, "I had dinner with Neil, and he said he'd be doing it." He laughs. "I'd like to do it, because I already have the themes! But with these big films, there are all these prima donnas like Brad Pitt, and Tom Cruise, who *isn't* a prima donna but certainly a star. They'll all be posturing—'Oh, I'll only do it if you give me 25 mil'—that kind of thing. So it'll be a mess until it's actually in production." In the meantime, Goldenthal and Jordan are in the talking stages of collaborating on a film about the first Irish Republican Army leader, a sort of Irish *Godfather*.

But as the hour grows late and fatigue enters the composer's voice, Goldenthal sums up his philosophy towards his work and offers encouraging advice to any Fango reader interested in film scoring. "If you compose three minutes of music a day, you've basically got it done in 20 or so days. You just have to keep plugging away. And the theater is the best route for fledgling or budding composers—because you learn about drama, about how music interacts with drama right there in the room with a live audience."

And before leaving, he repeats the essential ingredient for evoking the dreamworld in film with music, in his usual matter-of-fact way: "It's very important to experiment."

Then he returns to the studio and *Batman Forever* to do just that.



Goldenthal took a classical approach to several *Interview* scenes, but this one *didn't* call for a romantic piece.